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LOS ANGELES

Roy Dowell at Margo Leavin

Roy Dowell's new collages have a bold, graphic appeal. Dowell continues to make small works on paper whose dense structures seem suited to the intimacy of their size. But in the larger panels that dominated this show, he plays off his new source material: billboard posters. With their vivid cutouts of lettering, swaths of color

and pictured objects, these works emulate the noisy visuals of Los Angeles driving, where stop-and-go traffic is embellished by a mishmash of billboard logos and ad copy.

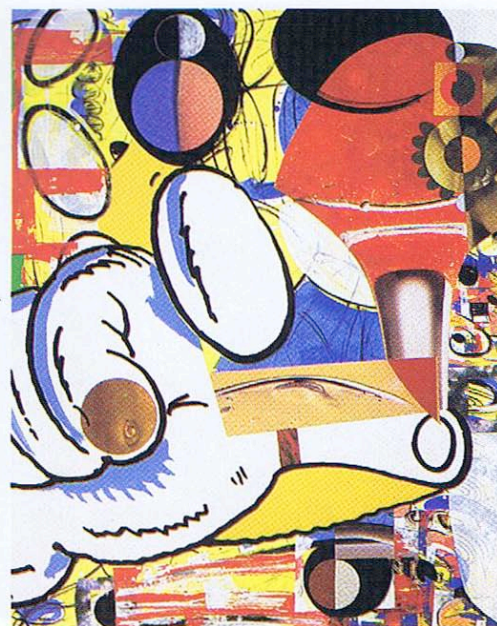
Using a compositional style like that of collage masters such as Juan Gris or Kurt Schwitters, Dowell adorns his found materials with painted lines, colors and shapes. Extending forms with handmade addendums, Dowell imbues each work with an intellectual complexity that is buoyant and downright sassy. His jags, swirls and layers have the formal congruency of a pattern too complicated to be repeated. In *Untitled* (#679), 1995, a large gloved

Mickey Mouse hand centers a centripetally riotous study of ovals, incorporating a pasted-on sunburst and a forest of hand-drawn spirals and squiggles.

Dowell's elements from advertising—such as graphic lettering or what in one case looks like the G.E. logo—are extracted and celebrated purely for their abstract beauty. Like Ellsworth Kelly, Dowell finds abstract shapes in lived visual experience—but the results look as if he put Kelly's stately chromatics through a blender. For such a sensualist, it is no accident that pictured bits of food products crop up in the works: blueberries and cheese, coconuts and kiwi fruit. Amalgamating Pop and abstraction, Dowell's upbeat compositions give a complex, open-ended order to the visual chaos of contemporary life. An engagement with real ticket stubs, ads and newspapers animated the early collages of

Picasso, Braque and Schwitters. Dowell continues that vital tradition.

—Michael Duncan



Roy Dowell: *Untitled* #679, 1995, acrylic and collage on panel, 60 by 48 inches; at Margo Leavin.